

Police Acting As Newsmen Ruled Out

Washington police will no longer pose as newsmen, a police spokesman said yesterday.

The new policy resulted from complaints by Washington media, most of them referring to an incident last Friday in which a policewoman identified herself at a news conference as a "free lance writer."

"It shall be against the policy of the department for any of its members to represent himself in any way as a member of a news gathering organization," said Paul Fuqua, police information officer.

However, he said, policemen will continue as necessary to pose as citizens engaged in other occupations, except when this is prohibited by law (such as masquerading as a doctor or lawyer).

Fuqua explained that plainclothes police attending public events, including news conferences with cameras, pens, or pencils will not be prevented from otherwise falsely identifying themselves. "We're doing nothing to prevent a policeman from identifying himself as, for instance, a telephone man," Fuqua said. "We're not closing that option."

Recently more than two dozen Evening Star reporters signed a pledge that henceforth they would announce at any news conference the presence of any police agent masquerading as a journalist. "We will try to identify the agent, get photos of him if possible, and complain to the (police) department," they said.

Managing Editor Eugene Patterson of The Washington Post asked in a letter Monday to Police Chief Jerry V. Wilson that the practice be stopped.